



Washington
State Department of
Agriculture

PLANT PROTECTION DIVISION PEST PROGRAM

ASIAN GIANT HORNET STAKEHOLDER UPDATE #5 – MAY 8, 2020

Welcome to all of our new followers. We initially intended to send out this update on Monday, but the recent worldwide interest in Asian giant hornets delayed our plans.

NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE AND BECOMING WORLD FAMOUS



1 Asian giant hornet specimen from Japan

On Saturday, May 2, the New York Times ran an [article about the Asian giant hornet](#) and our efforts to eradicate it. We had been working with the Times reporter for several weeks and this was the first opportunity for him to join us in the field as we set out traps. The reporter also interviewed others, including a researcher in Japan who referred to the Asian giant hornet as “murder hornets.” That was a new term to us.

Since the article’s publication, media and public interest have remained high. Chris Looney and Sven Spichiger, our two entomologists heading up the Asian giant hornet project for WSDA, were interviewed dozens of times. WSDA pest program staff have responded to hundreds of emails, phone calls, and online reports. We

especially appreciate the assistance of our partners at Washington State University, the Washington Invasive Species Council, the Washington Department of Health, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, who have all taken media requests, in addition to agriculture departments, entomologists, and invasive species managers around the world.

The publicity has been fantastic for raising awareness about Asian giant hornets, but it does appear that the “murder hornet” name has generated a disproportionate amount of fear relative to the threat that they pose. We would appreciate your help pushing out good information and help putting people’s minds at ease. While the threat of Asian giant hornets should not be taken lightly, the immediate threat of harm to people or even honey bees is very low, especially at present. If you see people commenting, asking questions, or sharing misinformation, please direct them to our website at agr.wa.gov/hornets for the most accurate and up-to-date information.

TRAPPING



2 Experimental traps ready to deploy

We started placing experimental traps in a very limited attempt to catch queens and test traps last month. **So far there have been no Asian giant hornets detected.** We have two more weeks of experimental trapping. This summer, we will begin trapping for worker hornets. The basic plan is to use trapping to detect the Asian giant hornets. If one is detected, additional traps will be placed to help hone in on a potential nest. We will then attempt to catch and track a live hornet back to the nest in order to eradicate the colony using special equipment.

PUBLIC ASIAN GIANT HORNET TRAPPING

We recently issued instructions to build a simple [bottle trap](#). However, we suggest that the **public refrain from putting up traps before July** in order to avoid unnecessarily killing non-target insects since there is almost no chance of catching a queen now.

The public should NOT attempt to catch a live Asian giant hornet or track it back to a nest. If you trap a live Asian giant hornet or find a nest, please notify WSDA immediately. We have obtained special equipment to manage these pests.

NO NEWS IS GOOD NEWS

Despite receiving thousands of reports over the last week (which we are still processing), **we have NOT confirmed any new Asian giant hornet sightings.**

We are still at two confirmed specimens from last year in Washington. Given the widespread publicity this has received, we would expect to have had additional confirmed reports if the Asian giant hornets were widespread. We're hopeful this means Asian giant hornets continue to be in very low numbers in the Pacific Northwest only.

WELCOME CASSIE CICHORZ



3 Cassie Cichorz conducting water testing

We'd like to welcome Cassie Cichorz to the WSDA Asian giant hornet team. Cassie will be helping conduct outreach and working with the public during WSDA's Asian giant hornet response.

Cassie Cichorz is fueled by a passion for education and agriculture. Naturally she is thrilled to be the Asian giant hornet community outreach and education specialist. Cassie comes to us from the rolling plains of South Dakota, sand hills of Nebraska, and the Rockies of Colorado. She battled educational inequities alongside the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, advocating with the Native Alliance. While restoring degraded watersheds with the Natural Resources Districts of Nebraska, Cassie worked to inform farmers, ranchers, and community members. She surveyed piping plover, and controlled purple loosestrife with the National Park Service. Cassie obtained her formal education through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. While there, she was in the Aquatic Ecosystem Ecology Lab to help restore native saline wetlands. Cassie's goal is to help eradicate Asian giant hornets through delivering project information, implementing outreach activities, and building on positive public momentum.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

Our pest program completed a programmatic non-specific State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) checklist. Unlike site-specific checklists which look at specific sites (such as for gypsy moth eradication), this type of checklist makes plans for how the program would address eradication in different environmental scenarios that could happen anywhere in the state. This is important as WSDA will need to conduct an eradication when a nest is found and the nest locations at this time are unknown.

The SEPA documents are now available for review at agr.wa.gov/hornets. Public comments will be accepted until May 18. Comments must be submitted in writing either by emailing PestProgram@agr.wa.gov or via U.S. mail to:

WSDA Pest Program
3939 Cleveland Ave SE
Olympia WA, 98501

OUTREACH

The global media attention has dramatically increased awareness about AGH in Washington State much more than we could ever have hoped for by our own efforts. Here are just some stats that demonstrate how much interest there has been in the last week:

- A Google news search of “murder hornets” brings up 1.8 million news articles and a search of “Asian giant hornet” brings up 148,000 articles as of 1 p.m. today.
- WSDA’s website this week was seeing up to 33,000 visitors per day. We normally average about 2,000 visitors per day.
- In the last seven days, there have been over 72,000 page views of agr.wa.gov/hornets.
- Our Asian Giant Hornet Watch Facebook group had 1,200 members last Friday. Today it has over 3,900.
- Last Friday our [Trapping for Asian giant hornets – 8 things to know](#) blog had about 24,000 views. Today it has over 96,000 views.
- On Facebook, our page views (people viewing our Facebook page) are up 11,162% for May 1 – 7 over the previous week. Our posts in that timeframe have reached nearly 800,000 people.

HELP SPREAD THE WORD

We could use your help spreading this post on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Please share if you are inclined!